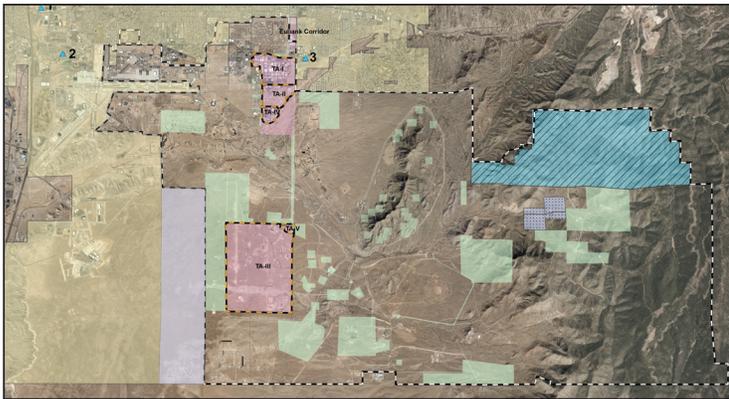


Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operation of Sandia National Laboratories/New Mexico (DOE/EIS-0556)

Project Overview



Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico

Introduction

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), is preparing a new Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS) for the Continued Operation of Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico (SNL/NM) (DOE/EIS-0556). The SWEIS will analyze the potential environmental impacts of the reasonable alternatives for continuing operations of SNL/NM for approximately the next 15 years.

NNSA formally started the SWEIS process with publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* in April 2023. The purpose of the NOI is to encourage public participation in the SWEIS process and to invite comments on the scope of analysis, including the range of alternatives, associated actions, and environmental issues that should be considered. Following completion of the SWEIS, NNSA will issue a Record of Decision announcing any decisions associated with the SWEIS.

The U.S. Air Force (Kirtland Air Force Base) and the U.S. Forest Service will participate as cooperating agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Background

SNL/NM is managed and operated as a Federally Funded Research and Development Center and national security laboratory whose multidisciplinary research capabilities, tools, and teams of experts focus on national priorities in science, energy, and national security. SNL/NM contains five secure technical areas on DOE fee-owned land, as well as buildings and structures on properties permitted from Kirtland Air Force Base.

SNL/NM currently operates under a SWEIS issued in 1999 (DOE/EIS-0281), its four supplement analyses, and other project-specific NEPA documents. In 2011, given the length of

time since the previous SWEIS was issued, new information, and the evolution of mission needs, NNSA determined that preparation of a new SWEIS was appropriate and issued an NOI. Completion of that SWEIS, however, was delayed by competing program and resource priorities. Since 2011, mission needs have continued to evolve. NNSA has now determined that preparation of a new SWEIS with a fresh scoping process would best serve the purposes of NEPA.

Purpose and Need for Agency Action

The purpose and need for continued operation of SNL/NM have not changed since the 1999 SWEIS and continue to include supporting NNSA and other DOE missions as directed by Congress and the President. Currently, facilities and capabilities that support many NNSA and other DOE mission priorities are found only at SNL/NM. NNSA needs to continue operations at the site to meet its core mission requirements. Continued operation will also provide capabilities in support of strategic partnership projects in national security-related research, development, and testing programs, and work for other entities, including other federal and state government agencies, industry, and academic institutions.

Tiering

Preparation of a SWEIS offers several potential benefits. A SWEIS can provide federal agencies and the public with an analysis of the potential environmental impacts from ongoing and reasonably foreseeable new or modified operations and facilities, and of reasonable alternatives, to provide a basis for site-wide decision making; help improve and coordinate agency plans and resource utilization; establish a baseline environmental impact for SNL/NM operations that can be compared to future changes; and promote NEPA process efficiency by enabling agencies to “tier” later project-specific NEPA analyses at the same site. “Tiering” allows agencies to eliminate repetitive discussion and focus on issues specific to future proposed actions.

Under the action alternatives, NNSA plans to evaluate many specific proposed projects and, ultimately, make decisions about which projects to implement. NNSA plans to provide sufficient environmental information in the SWEIS so that most, if not all, of the specific projects analyzed under the action alternatives, when sufficiently developed, can be implemented with little or no additional environmental review under NEPA. Nevertheless, NNSA will review the adequacy of the environmental information in the SWEIS and determine whether further NEPA review is appropriate before authorizing any projects.

Alternatives

The SWEIS will examine the range of reasonable alternatives and their potential environmental impacts:

- Under the No-Action Alternative, current operations at SNL/NM that support currently assigned missions would continue. This alternative represents maintaining the status quo and would include the programs and activities for which NEPA reviews have been completed and decisions have been made.
- Under the Modernized Operations Alternative, existing programs and activities would continue and would be supported by modernizing facilities, as necessary. This alternative includes (1) construction of replacement facilities, (2) upgrades to existing facilities and infrastructure, and (3) decontamination, decommissioning, and demolition projects. NNSA would replace facilities that are approaching their end-of-life, upgrade facilities to extend their lifetimes, and improve work environments to enable NNSA to meet operational requirements. This alternative also includes projects that would reduce the carbon footprint of operations and/or are net zero initiatives. It would not expand capabilities and operations beyond those that currently exist.
- The Expanded Operations Alternative (NNSA's Preferred Alternative) would include modernization actions, plus projects that would expand capabilities beyond those that currently exist. This alternative includes (1) construction and operation of new facilities and (2) upgrades to existing facilities that result in changing the nature and capabilities of these facilities.

Although the 1999 SWEIS included a Reduced Operations Alternative, NNSA does not plan to do so in the new SWEIS. NNSA does not consider a reduction in operations to be a reasonable alternative under NEPA because it does not meet the purpose and need for agency action, and NNSA would not be able to meet its essential mission needs for the foreseeable future.

Ways to provide comments on the proposed scope and content of the SWEIS:

- By verbally commenting at one of the two public meetings
- By submitting comment forms available at the in-person public meeting
- By email to: **SNL-SWEIS@nnsa.doe.gov**
- Or by U.S. Mail to:
Attn: SNL/NM SWEIS Comments
National Nuclear Security Administration
Sandia Field Office
PO Box 5400
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87185



Comments are due by **June 5, 2023**.
Late comments will be considered to the extent practicable.

Potential Environmental Issues for Analysis

NNSA seeks public comment on defining the scope of the following issues to address in the SWEIS:

- Land use and visual resources
- Water resources (surface and ground water)
- Site and community infrastructure
- Meteorology and air quality
- Noise and vibration
- Geology and soils
- Human health and safety
- Socioeconomics
- Site contamination and remediation
- Ecological resources
- Environmental justice
- Seismology
- Waste management and pollution prevention
- Cultural resources
- Traffic and transportation
- Climate change
- Sustainability

Activities and Schedule

The tentative schedule for the SWEIS is shown in the timeline below. It includes two main opportunities for public involvement: the 45-day public scoping period currently taking place and a 60-day comment period on the Draft SWEIS.

